

Salamanders and Newts

Includes mole salamanders, eastern, mandarin, and fire newts



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Salamanders may have very different needs, depending on the species, the season, and whether they are juvenile or adult. Most are aquatic at the larval stage. The mandarin newts and mole salamanders, which include tigers, are burrowers, but breed in an aquatic environment. The juvenile eastern newt is terrestrial, but the adult is aquatic. Most salamanders need a cool environment.



Is a salamander or newt the right companion animal for you?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Check "Yes" or "No" after reading the following statements:

- I can provide an appropriate habitat for this amphibian.
- I will handle this amphibian no more than necessary.
- I can commit to providing proper care for this companion animal.
- A mature person will provide responsible and primary care for this companion animal.

If you answered "Yes" to these statements, a salamander or a newt may be the right choice for you! Continue reading about how to care for salamanders and newts and consult with a PETCO associate to learn more. PETCO is committed to responsible companion animal care.

Average Size 4 to 13 inches long

Life Span 3 to 10 years, up to 30 years

Diet If aquatic: brine shrimp, bloodworms, live and frozen chopped night crawlers
 If terrestrial: provide a variety of insects, such as small crickets, mealworms, whiteworms, tubifex worms

Feeding Feed at night, every 1–3 days; may handfeed, using tweezers
 Dust the insects daily with a pure calcium supplement and once or twice weekly with a vitamin/mineral supplement; remove uneaten crickets (they may bite the salamander)
 Tiger salamanders sometimes beg; avoid overfeeding

Housing Tank – For terrarium, use a glass, acrylic, or plastic tank; for aqua-terrarium, use a glass tank; separate into land and water areas with a partition, or provide an island or plastic lily pad
 Cover – Tight-fitting screen lid for terrarium; hood for aqua-terrarium; plastic cover with air holes if using plastic box
 Substrate for land areas – Mulch-type commercial material; unbleached paper towels, soil, dampened sphagnum moss, and bark; avoid gravel and artificial turf (too harsh for skin)
 Habitat – For terrarium, provide a water bowl to submerge in if needed; add filtered, chlorine-free water to soil at one side only, so one side is moist (not wet) and the other is dry, allowing animal to choose; add pieces of bark for hiding places; for aqua-terrarium, use water filter but ensure areas of still water
 Temperature – 55° F. to 78° F., with humidity about 70%
 Do not house different species of reptiles together; do not crowd; be prepared to switch between aquarium and aqua-terrarium or terrarium, as the pet's needs change

- Recommended Supplies**
- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tank or plastic box | <input type="checkbox"/> Substrate/commercial mulch | <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bark, plastic lily pad | <input type="checkbox"/> Worm cup (aqua-terrarium) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tweezers (terrarium) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humidity gauge | <input type="checkbox"/> Water filter (aqua-terrarium) | <input type="checkbox"/> Water bowl (terrarium) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Book about amphibians | | |

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Normal Behavior and Interaction

Salamanders have good vision, an excellent sense of smell and taste; they are nocturnal and tend to be shy, although tigers recognize their feeder

Terrestrial species, such as mandarin newts, tigers, and marbled salamanders, hibernate by burrowing; do not disturb them during this time

Salamanders are gregarious; may cluster in one hiding spot even when others are available

Fire newts are active and energetic, which is not true of all newts

Habitat Maintenance

Use an appropriate sized, small-mesh, soft net to move or block the amphibian while doing habitat maintenance; avoid handling; if you handle them be sure to wear latex gloves; residue or oil on your skin can harm amphibians

In aquarium, use filter to help keep water clean; exchange water weekly

Thoroughly clean the tank at least once a week: set salamander or newt aside in a secure habitat; scrub the tank and furnishings with a 3% bleach solution; rinse thoroughly with water, removing all smell of bleach; dry the tank and furnishings; and add clean substrate

Grooming and Hygiene

Inspect skin for abrasions, as well as signs of parasites, infection, or disease

Always wash your hands before and after touching your salamander or newt or habitat contents to help prevent *Salmonella* and other infectious diseases

Salamanders molt every few days to every few weeks; they usually eat the discarded skin

Signs of a Healthy Animal

- Eats regularly; digests food properly
- Maintains weight; avoids obesity
- Healthy skin; clear eyes

Common Health Issues

Health Issue (alpha)	Symptoms or Causes	Suggested Action
Gas Bubble Disease	Bloating; bubbles under skin surface, loss of balance.	Ensure water is not too aerated; consult with an exotic animal veterinarian.
Metabolic Bone Disease	Deformities, soft bones, paralysis.	Use vitamin/calcium supplements; consult with an exotic animal veterinarian.
Skin Problems	Abrasions, bacterial and fungal infections.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian for treatment.
Wounds	Most likely to happen when animal is introduced to new surroundings and panics.	Consult with an exotic animal veterinarian for treatment.

Red Flags

- Weight loss
- Skin parasites
- Diarrhea
- Distressed breathing
- Lethargy
- Cloudy or dull eyes
- Skin lesions
- Bloated abdomen
- Poor balance

If you notice any of these signs, please contact your exotic animal veterinarian.

Sources

Keeping Amphibians: A Practical Guide to Caring for Frogs, Toads, Newts, and Salamanders (Unusual Pets Series) by Andrew R. Gray
Salamanders and Newts as a New Pet by John Coborn
The World of Frogs, Toads, Salamanders, and Newts by Robert Hofrichter

Note: The information on this Care Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please refer to the above sources or contact your veterinarian as appropriate.